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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (9/22): THE UN, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Main Stories:

Israel to open synagogue next to Al-Aqsa Mosque, lead headlines in Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida declare. Citing a report by Israeli-based Al Aqsa Institute, a branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, the dailies report that the new synagogue will be located "only" 50 meters from the holy plaza of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and will connect to a network of tunnels underneath the mosque complex.

Israeli Premier Olmert's September 21 resignation and efforts by Israeli Foreign Minister Livni to form a new government is highlighted on all front pages. In related news, Al-Quds cites Israeli daily Yediot Ahranot in quoting an unnamed senior Palestinian official stating that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is working with the U.S. to "maintain the principals and understandings reached in recent months with the Israelis, as the basis for any future negotiations." The same article quotes Rafiq Hussayni, PA President Abbas' Chief of Staff, telling Britain's Sunday Telegraph that some Palestinian officials may take the "decisive step" to dismantle the PA if current negotiations with Israel fail to result in a permanent agreement.

The Egyptian effort to launch unity talks among Palestinian factions is the subject of several front-page stories. Al-Quds reports that Cairo is engaged in "extensive efforts" to end inter-Palestinian division by building talks on a "sound basis." Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt Nabil Amr is quoted predicting that the next two months will be crucial to the success or failure of the talks. Al-Ayyam quotes senior Fatah leader Abdallah Abu Samhadanah commenting that Fatah will reject the formation of any unity government with Hamas, in an effort to avoid, "the same old problems." Another Al Ayyam article quotes Diab Al-Ali, head of West Bank Palestinian security forces, warning that the PA will have

no alternative but to use force against Hamas in Gaza. A third article in the same paper quotes Fatah leader Azzam Al-Ahmad explaining that until now, Hamas has been sending "negative signals" vis-à-vis a launch of Palestinian dialogue.

Al-Ayyam front-pages a report issued by the PLO's Negotiation Affairs Department reporting that since the Annapolis meetings, Israel has intensified settlement activities in the West Bank and Jerusalem. The report explains that the Israeli Government has issued tenders for the construction of 10,000 new housing units in East Jerusalem, since Annapolis.

The "sudden" closure of the Rafah Gaza/Egypt crossing point on September 21 by Egypt, is highlighted on the dailies' front-pages. Al-Quds reports that Egyptian authorities decided to close the crossing due to "technical difficulties" turning back many Palestinians seeking entry into Egypt, including students and those in need of medical care. The crossing was opened on September 21.

Al Quds' front page runs the results of a recent U.S. public opinion poll conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, showing that 51 percent of American respondents support negotiating with Hizbollah and 53 percent support negotiations with Hamas.

Weekend stories

Sunday, September 21, 2008

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Al-Quds ran an exclusive interview with Nayef Hawatmah, Secretary General of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine under the headline "Hamas' conditions for National dialogue threaten its success, and Hamas' indirect negotiations with Israel are of no help to the Palestinian people." Hawatmah calls for the, "halt of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, because they only benefit Israel, and are, "illogical in the shadow of continued Israeli aggression, the siege, and settlement activities." Hawatmah also called on all Palestinian parties to leave party politics behind and work towards making national dialogue a success.

Al-Quds' and Al-Hayyat Al-Jadida's front pages quoted Nabil Amr, Palestinian Ambassador to Cairo and representative to the Arab league, calling on Fatah to conduct a critical reassessment of the organization and work hard to ensure that the party's 6th Convention will be held before the end of the year. The papers quoted Amr stating that, "the world holds us responsible for the tragic situation that the Palestinian cause finds itself in."

On the "local life" inside page, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reported that the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem organized and funded an activity for Jenin youth to beautify 6 Jenin public schools. The activity was also featured on Wafa news agency's websites.

Saturday, September 20, 2008

Palestinian Authority President Abbas' op-ed in the Wall Street Journal was quoted on the front pages of all three dailies. Abbas confirms that, "I continue to believe that we can achieve a lasting peace." He pledges full cooperation with peace efforts in the days and months ahead, and thanks the Bush Administration for its assistance in the peace process. In a related article, Al-Ayyam reported that Abbas will attend the opening session of the UN General Assembly. The article also quoted the full White House statement that President Bush, "looks forward to discussing with President Abbas the progress made toward building Palestinian institutions and toward realizing the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1. Al-Quds independent argues in its main editorial under the title, "International Responsibility" (09/22): [I]nternal political

crises in Israel... directly impact the Palestinian issue and efforts to reach a solution [to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict]... How much longer will the international community remain ignorant of the successive Israeli governments' policies to destroy peace efforts... [the situation] lends increasing credibility to the demand that the Palestinian file should be transferred to the United Nations so that the international community will be forced to carry out its obligations [to enforce] international resolutions... Israeli governments have abused negotiations to expand settlements, strengthen the siege, isolate and judaize Jerusalem, cause the fragmentation of the Palestinian Territories and complete the racist separation barrier in the heart of the occupied West Bank."

¶2. "Regular columnist of Al-Hayat Al-Jadida official, Adli Sadiq opines under the title, "Daughter of the Institution" (09/22): "Tzipi Livni [her political career] was born with the creation of a new party institution [Kadima]. Beyond that, she has no political or intellectual value... In this country [Israel] of theft, murder and racial discrimination... no official can go far without being

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confronted by an institution... Her father and mother, Likud activists, did not notice any special qualities that distinguish her as a leader nor does her university degree prepare her for it... it was the institution of the [Kadima] party, filling a void, that gave Livni her great self-confidence and strong sense of security that, as long as she abides by the [party's] rules, she can overcome the pitfalls. Today, she is a leader who looks from the window of her institution and declares herself a leader, and why not?!"

Marchese